LIFEWISE
Middle School

SPECIAL LESSON 1
THE BIBLE IS TRUSTWORTHY
2 Timothy 3:16–17; Psalm 18:30; 2 Samuel 8:28

THE BIBLE IS TRUSTWORTHY
The Bible is God's true, perfect and authoritative message to us.

JESUS CONNECTION
God calls Jesus "The Word" in John 1:1. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to the earth. He is the living example of God's words and the exact representation of God the Father (Hebrews 1:3).

LIFEWISE QUALITY
QUALITY – Introduction to LifeWise character qualities.

PERSONAL INTRODUCTIONS
- Teacher: Introduce yourself, tell the class a few personal things of interest (show a picture of your family, list your hobbies or interests, etc.) and share why you enjoy teaching Bible classes.
- Volunteers: Introduce the volunteers, have them share a couple of personal facts and share why they volunteer.

CLASSROOM INTRODUCTIONS
- Class Structure: Explain that each class will typically include an activity and a Bible passage to read and discuss. Share what part of the Bible students will study:
  - Year 1: The Law and Prophets (Old Testament)
  - Year 2: The Life and Teachings of Jesus (New Testament)
  - Year 3: Living Out Jesus' Mission (New Testament)
- Head, Heart, Hands: Use the graphics to introduce the HHH concept. Show an example of the HHH handout they will work on during class or at home after each lesson.
  - Head – Learn what the Bible says.
  - Heart – Explore how God can change our hearts to be more like His.
  - Hands – Determine how to live out God's instructions.
- Your Rules and Expectations
  - Public School rules will still be in effect at LifeWise Academy.
  - Be present and participate during class.
  - Bible Verse: Share and have students look up a Bible verse that encompasses the classroom rules (e.g. Luke 6:31)

STUDENT INTRODUCTIONS

Name Juggling

- Instruct students to stand in a circle (about 10 students per circle) an arm's length away from those on their right and left. Provide 4 balls per circle. Before beginning the game, tell students that they must remember who they throw the ball to. Throw a ball to a student in the circle. That student must say their own name and throw the ball to someone else who will say their own name and pass it again.

- Play continues until each student has said their name once. Challenge students to play again in the same order and keep adding balls until all four balls are being thrown at once. If you have more than one circle, have them compete by seeing which group can juggle the most balls at once.

One Thing You Need to Know About Me

- Pass out paper and pens. Everyone will write down their name and one unique thing about themselves, fold their papers and place them into a container. Mix them up.

- Read the unique fact on each paper without giving away who wrote it down. Allow the class to guess what statement belongs with which student.
  - For a large class, pull out four pieces of paper and call the names of the people on the papers to come forward. Read the unique fact on each paper without giving away who wrote it down. Allow the class to guess what statement belongs with which student.
  - For a smaller class, read one statement at a time and have the class guess who wrote it.

INTRO OPTIONS

Fact or Fiction

- Read the statements below one by one, asking the class to vote whether they think the statement is fact or fiction. Consider using powerpoint slides (or large pieces of paper) to display the statements so you can reveal the answer on the next slide (or the back of the paper).
  - One of the most popular pet names in the U.S.A. is "Fluffy." (*Fiction; "Max."*)
  - The yo-yo was originally developed as a weapon in China. (*Fiction.*)
  - Humans have unique fingerprints. Gorillas have unique nose prints. (*Fact.*)
  - Smoking is the leading cause of house fires in the U.S.A. (*Fiction; Cooking.*)
  - If you are stung by a jellyfish, you should have someone urinate on the sting. (*Fiction.*)
  - The average American eats 46 slices of pizza per year. (*Fact.*)
  - The first music record ever featured "Mary Had a Little Lamb." (*Fact.*)
  - The bat is the only mammal that flies. (*Fact.*)
  - Professional baseball umpires are required to wear black underwear. (*Fact.*)
  - It takes 25 feet of wire to make a slinky. (*Fiction; 63 feet.*)

- How did you know if each answer was fact or fiction? Is there somewhere you could check these answers to make sure I am telling you the truth?

- Knowing the answers to these questions isn't essential, but today we are going to talk about a subject that is incredibly important. In fact, it could completely change your life: How do we know the Bible is trustworthy?

52 Card Pick-Up

- Divide the class into teams, and give each team a deck of cards. Make sure each deck has a different image on the back so teams can identify their cards. Ask for one volunteer on each team to flip the cards so they scatter all over the classroom at the same time. Count to three and let them scatter the cards. The teams will then locate all their cards and put them in the right order (ace—king), in their proper suits, by lining them up on the floor. The first team to finish putting them in the correct order wins.

- You are probably wondering what 52 card pick-up has to do with learning about the Bible. The Bible contains 66 books written by at least 40 different men who lived at different times (over a time period of 1,500 years) and in many different places (3 continents). Most of these men never met. Rather, they were given a message from God that was written down on scrolls and then organized over time into types of writing, just as you organized the playing cards into different suits. The incredible thing is that these messages match one another.

BIBLE STORY

[Create a powerpoint presentation using the following information. Use as many pictures and visuals as possible. If powerpoint is not an option, print off main points and pictures as visual aids.]

Introduction

- The Bible makes claims about itself. It says that it is more than just a rule book, a book of wise sayings or one of many ways we can know truth or spiritual things.

- So what does the Bible say about itself?

The Bible Says It Is the Inspired Word of God

- Ask a student to read 2 Timothy 3:16–17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
- Who inspired the Bible? (*God.*)
    - *Inspired* is a word that means "God breathed."
    - God inspired, or guided, men on what to write down through the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- Why did God give us His Word? (*So we are able to know God and follow Him.*)
- The Bible claims to be God's very words to us. But, you might wonder, can we prove it?
    - This claim cannot be proven by outside evidence.
    - Instead, as we read it, the Holy Spirit who inspired it enables us to recognize its claims about God and about the Bible as true. In other words, we see it more clearly as we learn it more fully.

The Bible Says It Is Perfect

- Ask a student to read Psalm 18:30, "God—His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is pure. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."
- God is perfect or without flaw or fault.
- God is perfect or without flaw or fault. Because God is perfect, everything He says and does is perfect. Therefore, His Word must be perfect too.
- We will look at the evidence for this in just a moment.

The Bible Says It Is True

- Ask a student to read 2 Samuel 7:28, "Lord God, You are God; Your words are true, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant." and John 17:17, "Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth."
- God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), so His Word can be trusted. It is true in the sense that it contains no factual errors. The big, fancy word is *inerrant*, or "without error."
- Simply put, God's Word does not (nor does it promise to) cover every fact there is to know, but what it does say about any particular subject is true.
- Faith is not blindly believing something. It is always a belief based on evidence. We see that there is sufficient proof to justify our belief. The Bible makes claims about itself that we must take seriously.
- *[Internal and external evidence sections may be skipped with younger classes.]*
- Is there any evidence to prove the Bible's claims are true? Yes, there is!
    - Internal evidence:
        - Fulfilled prophecy
            - Prophecy: a message given by God to His people about something that will happen in the future.
            - The Bible predicts the future in a very specific way. None of these prophecies have been proven false, and 2,000 prophecies have been fulfilled exactly as predicted years or centuries before they happened.
                - Example 1: Micah 5:2 — The Savior would be born in Bethlehem.
                    - Luke 2:4–7 — Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
                - Example 2: Psalm 22:16 — The Savior would have His hands and feet pierced (predicted before crucifixion was invented).
                    - John 19:18 — Jesus was crucified.
                - Example 3: Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 predict Jerusalem will be destroyed.
                    - In 70 A.D., Jerusalem was destroyed. This event was recorded by a Roman historian named Josephus.
                - Example 4: Jeremiah 31 predicts that the nation of Israel will be reestablished.
                    - In 1948, Israel officially became a country again after almost 2,000 years of being dissolved.
    - External evidence:
        - Archeological discoveries
            - Archeology is the study of ancient people and cultures.
            - Archeology verifies many statements in the Bible.
                - Example 1: Luke, a doctor and disciple of Jesus, recorded the books of Luke and Acts. His account has been verified by archeological evidence in 32 countries, 54 cities and 9 islands.
                - Example 2: John, a disciple of Jesus, recorded the books of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation. John described 5 porches near the pool of Bethesda. For years, archaeologists thought he was incorrect. In the recent past, the five porches were discovered 40 feet under the ground.

        - Example 3: In 1994, an ancient stone carving was uncovered that referred to the "house of David," the first archeological evidence of King David outside of the Bible.
    - Archeology has never proven any statement in the Bible to be false.
- Historical evidence
    - What kind of evidence does it take to prove that something actually happened? How much evidence is needed?
        - Example: If someone accused your friend of stealing something from you, what evidence would you want before you believed it to be true?
    - History is the study of past events.
    - History proves that the Bible is accurate.
        - Example 1: We have over 24,000 ancient copies of the New Testament. This is more than any other ancient document.
            - Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, wrote from 384 B.C. to 332 B.C. The earliest writing we have from him is a copy 1,400 years later. We only have five copies.
            - Suetonius, a Roman historian, wrote from 70 A.D.–140 A.D. The earliest writing we have from him is a copy 800 years later. We don't have any surviving copies from Suetonius.
            - No one doubts that Aristotle or Suetonius are real or that their writings are inaccurate.
            - Incredibly, 230 of the 24,000 copies we have of the New Testament date only a difference of 550 years or less and some copies are much closer. One copy of the book of John was only written within about 35 years of John's lifetime.
            - There is overwhelmingly greater evidence that the Bible is accurate.

Conclusion: The Bible Is Trustworthy

- Student Discussion Question: Why does it matter that the Bible is trustworthy?
- If the Bible is trustworthy, and it claims to be the book that records God's inspired, perfect and true words, then it is also authoritative. We must allow it to instruct us how to think and live. God's words are superior to all other authorities, opinions and traditions and, as such, are meant to be a standard for us in every area of our lives.

JESUS CONNECTION

God calls Jesus "The Word" in John 1:1. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to the earth. He is the living example of God's words and the exact representation of God the Father (Hebrews 1:3).

PRAYER

Allow students to share or write down prayer requests. Spend time praying for students and your journey through God's Word.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Discussion Questions

- Print and cut the discussion questions at the following website into strips and place in a jar: https://www.breakawayoutreach.com/80-youth-discussion-questions. Over the course of the class, as time allows, select a new student to pull out a strip and answer the question.

Class Teams

- Divide the class into three teams for the entire year (trimester/semester, etc). Use a primary color to designate each team. Each group will choose a group name that includes their color (e.g.,Green Eggs and Ham, Blueberries, Yellow Stars, etc.).
- This way students can quickly divide into teams and play a review game. Keep a prize bucket (dollar store items, LifeWise swag, candy, etc.) and award a prize to each member of the winning team when they win a game.

Notebooks

- Give each student a notebook to keep at LifeWise during the year and have them decorate the cover. Notebooks can be used to take notes, journal, do games and keep track of points. If using primary color teams, have a color-coordinated notebook for each member of the team to keep track of points, etc.

The Hot Seat

- Ask a would you rather questions to each student as you take attendance. Have them choose and briefly explain their answer. If class time is short, consider asking one or two students every class. Optional questions:
  - Would you rather have no deodorant for one week or no toothpaste for one week?
  - Would you rather be the top athlete or the top student?
  - Would you rather miss the last chapter of a book or the last 10 minutes of a movie?
  - Would you rather eat lunch with a group of random students or eat alone?
  - Would you rather go to school 50 years in the future or 50 years in the past?

- Would you rather be able to ONLY shout or ONLY whisper?
- Would you rather have to clean the school bathroom or the cafeteria?
- Would you rather have your school principal over for dinner or your math teacher?
- Would you rather have an hour-long bus ride to school or a 30-minute walk to school?
- Would you rather wear shorts to school in the winter or snow pants to school in the summer?
- Would you rather spend the day in wet clothes or smelly clothes?
- Would you rather go on a field trip to a museum or an amusement park?
- Would you rather sleep over in the school library or the school gym?
- Would you rather go back to 1st grade or forward to 12th grade?
- Would you rather sit next to your best friend during class or on the school bus?
- Would you rather carry a book bag filled with heavy books or a book bag filled with jingle bells?
- Would you rather go without air conditioning or heat?
- Would you rather win American Idol or American Ninja Warrior?
- Would you rather be an only child or have 10 siblings?
- Would you rather do all your family's laundry or cooking?
- Would you rather be covered in peanut butter or ketchup?
- Would you rather have all your food be spicy or sweet?
- Would you rather be allergic to chocolate or to bread?

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

Introduction to LifeWise character qualities.

HEAD

What does it mean that the Bible is the "inspired" Word of God?

List two reasons why the Bible is trustworthy.

HEART

Why does it matter that the Bible is true? What are some reasons you struggle to believe this?

Do you believe God's Word should be the highest authority in instructing all people how to think and live? Why or why not?

HANDS

Since the Bible is trustworthy, it's important to learn how to use it. This week, start to memorize the books of the Bible, in order, and recite what you've learned for your LifeWise teacher at your next class.

- If all 66 titles are too much, try just the Old Testament or just the New Testament this week and work on the other one for next time.
- Google "books of the Bible songs." It's much easier to learn the titles with music!